



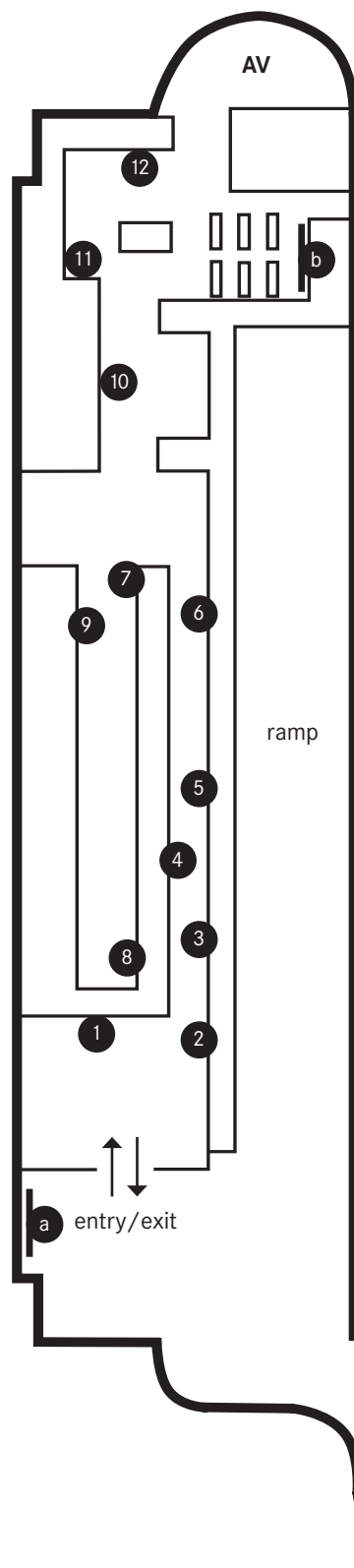
6 June – 11 November 2007

Spanning popular culture and graphic design, this exhibition is of interest to secondary students of visual arts, visual design, design and technology, and society and culture.

Cinema India: the art of Bollywood charts the historical, political and cultural changes experienced by the country, as seen through the eyes of the Indian film industry. The exhibition also highlights Australia's connection with Bollywood.

The exhibition features movie posters and other advertising materials, supplemented by film clips and some costumes, that convey the vibrancy of Bollywood, the largest movie-making industry in the world. This bilingual entertainment giant makes an ideal subject for a comparative study of cinema culture, an area in which the United States is often regarded as the dominant player.

Floor plan



1. Introduction
2. The art of advertising
3. Images of nationalism
4. The glory of India
5. India after independence
6. Youth culture and internationalism
7. Love and romance
8. 1970s and 1980s
9. Depiction of women
10. Bollywood and Australia
11. Global perspective
12. Fearless Nadia

- a. Film trailers
- b. Film excerpts

AV Audiovisual: this documentary showcases the artists who produce the large, hand-painted hoardings of Bollywood films (23 mins).

Syllabus links

The exhibition is especially relevant to the following syllabuses and their areas of teaching or learning outcomes:

Years 7–10

1. Graphic Technology

The outcomes

- interpret, design, produce and evaluate a variety of graphical presentations using a range of manual and computer-based media and techniques
- appreciate the nature and scope of graphics in industry and the relationships between graphics technology, the individual, society and the environment.

2. English

The outcomes

- access, analyse, evaluate and use information from a variety of sources
- understand and appreciate social, cultural, geographical and historical contexts and participate as active and informed citizens
- express themselves through creative activity and engage with the artistic, cultural and intellectual work of others.

Years 11–12

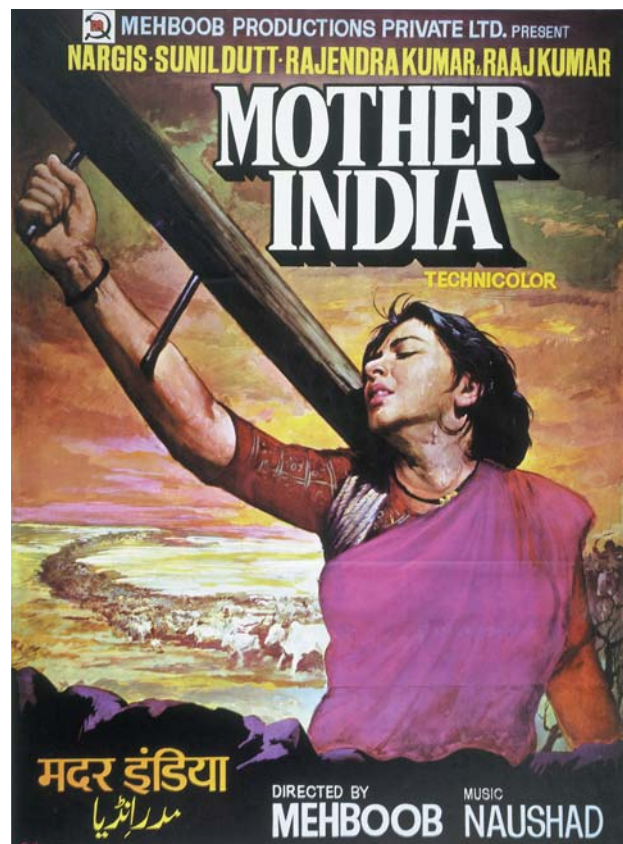
1. Society and Culture

The outcomes

- describe the interaction between persons, societies, cultures and environments across time
- investigate power, authority, gender and technology, and describe their influence on decision-making and participation in society.

Areas

- a. Preliminary course: The Social and cultural world
- b. HSC Core: Personal Interest Project
- c. HSC Depth Study: Popular culture



Mother India, Seth Studios, © V&A Images / Courtesy Mehboob Productions Private Ltd.

2. English

The outcomes

- develop awareness of personal, social, historical, cultural and workplace contexts
- develop skills in analysing the relationships between texts and technologies of production and evaluate the ways in which the medium itself influences the shape and nature of meaning.

Students studying Visual Arts (yrs 7–12) or Visual Design (yrs 7–12) will also benefit from this exhibition.

Cinema India: the art of Bollywood

Introduction

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world, producing films that range from regional-language to art-house. *Bollywood* describes the Hindi-language cinema of Mumbai (formerly Bombay). Viewed throughout the country, it is regarded as the national cinema of India.

Bollywood films are watched by billions of people across the globe. They have their own distinct style, characterised by song and dance sequences, bold, colourful imagery, stories within stories, archetypal characters and exaggerated depictions of emotion. The films provide escapist entertainment and present characters and themes that convey traditional moral values. Bollywood generates music, fashion and images that have become an integral part of the popular culture of urban India.

This exhibition explores the history of Bollywood film advertising from the 1930s to the present day.

The art of advertising

विज्ञापनों की कला

Cinema was introduced to India in the late 1800s. Today India produces nearly 1000 films each year. Growth in the industry occurred during a period of great change in the country. Industrialisation, urbanisation, the fight for independence from British rule and subsequent developments are all evident in films. Film advertising also illustrates those social, economic and political changes. It reflects different phases of Indian history as well as the aesthetic styles of the period and technical developments in advertising.

India is a large and diverse nation, with more than 20 official state languages. Advertisements have always had to communicate across the country's regional, religious and linguistic boundaries. Visual impact is essential, with key elements of the films expressed through bold designs, bright colours, inventive typography and minimal text.

Hindi and English are India's official national languages and are used for the headings in this exhibition.



Shaheed (Martyr), Artview, © V&A Images/Courtesy Mehboob Productions Private Ltd.

Images of nationalism

राष्ट्रियता की छवियाँ

The British government ruled India from the 1800s, although the British East India Company had increasingly controlled parts of the country since the early 1600s. India's call for independence intensified when it was brought into World War II by Britain. The resulting effects, which included millions of deaths in the 1943 famine in the province of Bengal, led to growing discontent and the rise of the Quit India movement. The most important figure in the struggle for self-government was Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the political party known as the Indian National Congress. He urged the Indian people to defy foreign rule through non-violent civil disobedience.

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From the 1940s, a series of films was made to stir patriotic fervour. This included stories of war heroes such as Dr Dwarkanath Kotnis and Subash Chandra Bose.

This was a time of tightened censorship, and no references to the independence movement or to national leaders such as Gandhi were allowed in films. Instead filmmakers used symbolism, which was also incorporated into film advertising.

The glory of India

भारतीय वैभव

During the 1940s and 1950s many films depicted historic or princely India. These were big-budget spectacles with grand sets, magnificent costumes and memorable music. Visually stunning, they provided audiences with an escape from the hardships of war and the fight for independence.

The stories combined fact and myth. Some — particularly those set during the great Mughal empire (1526–1800s) — portrayed historical figures and created a nostalgic representation of imperial grandeur. These films reinforced nationalist

aspirations. At a time of political conflict between Hindus and Muslims over the government of India, filmmakers were reluctant to explore contemporary political issues for fear of censorship and disguised them by setting them in the past. As a result, the Mughal period was represented as the golden age of racial and religious understanding, suggesting that differences could be resolved.

These films inspired an emerging nation by creating an image of India based on the glory of its past. The advertisements captured the public imagination by reflecting that glory.

India after independence

स्वतंत्र भारत

In 1947 India gained independence from British rule. The country was caught between the need to modernise and continue the technological advances of the last two decades, and the need to maintain traditional moral values and culture.

Cities were at the centre of many social and economic changes. Seen as a source of employment and wealth, they attracted thousands of migrant



Aan, Seth Studios, © V&A Images/Courtesy Mehboob Productions Private Ltd.

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workers from the villages. In this period of transition, films looked at the question of national identity and what 'being Indian' meant. They explored issues of modernity versus tradition, of urban life versus the rural ideal. Cities were projected as corrupt and evil while villages were seen to preserve social and moral values.

The most important film of this time, *Mother India*, portrayed rural life as the true 'essence' of India. The heroine, Radha, embodied the values and customs that form the basis of traditional Indian society. She stood as a symbol of Indian womanhood and a new independent nation.

Youth culture and internationalism

नई पीढ़ी और अंतर्राष्ट्रियता

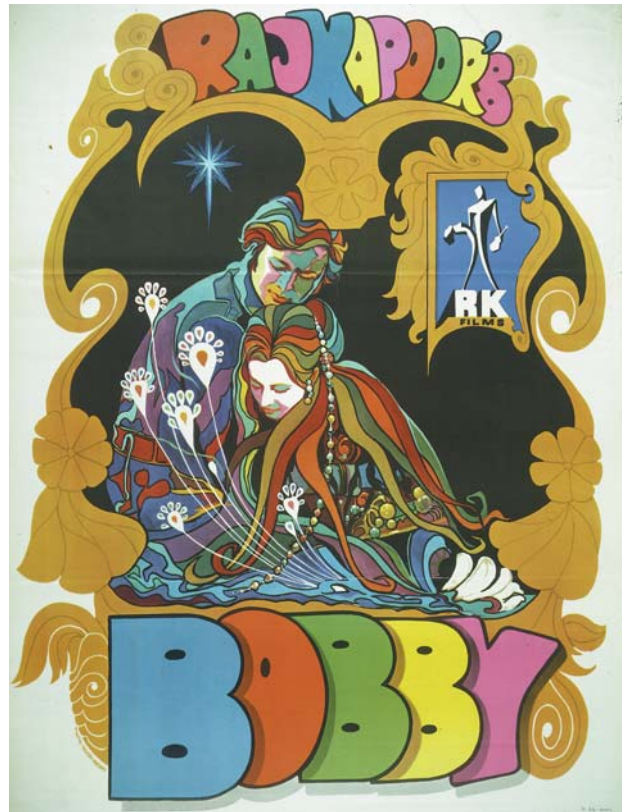
From the 1960s, Bollywood films began to look beyond national boundaries. The world outside India offered exciting possibilities for new filming locations. Paris, Rome, Switzerland and London, along with Japan, became exotic backdrops for romances.

A more international outlook also focused attention on youth culture. In the west, this was a period of economic growth, which was accompanied by the spread of a new liberal culture. There was a rise in consumerism, new trends in music, fashion and hairstyles, and increased sexual freedom. This lifestyle was partially taken up in India, and projected through films such as *Bobby* and later *Love story*, which focused on teenage romance for the first time. Visually this was represented primarily through women's fashion, particularly bouffant hairstyles and heavy black eyeliner.

Love and romance

प्यार और मुहब्बत

Romance plays a major role in nearly all Bollywood films. However the family is still the most powerful moral force and illicit romance is discouraged.



Bobby, Tilak, Tirath & Oberai, © V&A Images/Courtesy R K Films.

The most common theme is the couple who are in love but cannot be together due to family rivalry or differences in race, religion, caste, class or wealth — sometimes with tragic consequences. This selection of posters brings together some of Indian cinema's great romantic couples. Simple, bold images convey their star status and the passionate intensity of their relationships.

In western cinema, kissing on the lips often symbolises love, but this kind of kiss is rarely seen in Indian films. It was banned by censors until the 1980s. Since then the industry has maintained a self-imposed ban, with a few recent exceptions. Instead the sensual and erotic aspects of love are suggested in the song and dance sequences. These occur in a fantasy world away from the moral framework of the main narrative, where anything is possible.

1970s and 1980s

सत्तर और अस्सी के दशक

The 1970s saw further upheaval in India. War with Pakistan led to the creation of Bangladesh, the government imposed a state of emergency curtailing personal freedom, and there were rising levels of inflation, urban poverty and crime.

Indian cinema responded by creating a new type of film that reflected the anger and aggression of the period. Along with themes of revenge and violence, there was a new type of character — the anti-hero. Amitabh Bachchan, the most famous Indian actor of all time, rose to fame in this role of the angry young man.

A new graphic style also emerged. Bold, exaggerated brush strokes created dynamic, expressive images that suited the films' high emotional intensity.

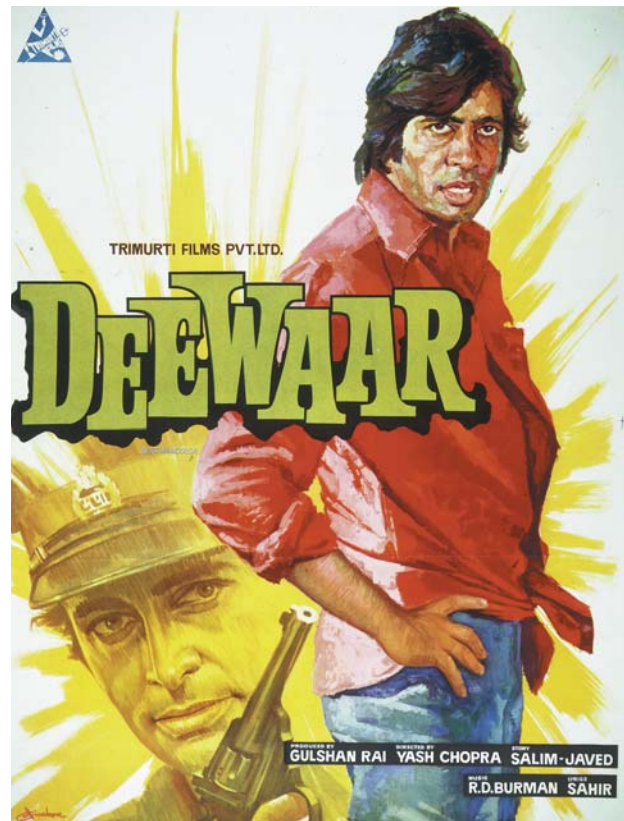
Named after an Indian spice mix, *masala* films follow a formula that includes specific key ingredients. Music, archetypal characters and star actors were essential components of these films since the 1940s, and by the 1980s they had become much more exaggerated. Posters for these films used a mix, or montage, of images depicting these components.

Depiction of women

नारी का चरित्रांकन

Until the 1990s, women were usually depicted as either 'traditional' or 'modern'. The traditional woman was pale skinned and dressed in a sari or rural clothes. As a dutiful wife and mother, she was likened to Sita and Savitri, goddesses from Indian mythology. Her high moral standards were held up as a measure of the nation's character. In contrast a modern woman, dressed in western clothes, was assumed to have all the immoral values associated with a western lifestyle.

In the past decade, the visual representation of women has changed dramatically. Recent films show



Deewaar (The Wall), Diwaker Karekare, © V&A Images/Courtesy of Yash Raj Films Private Ltd and Gulshan Rai.

women in sexy western designer clothes. However this is not a moral judgement on their character. Instead it indicates the affluent lifestyles of the new middle class, who are the focus of these films.

Film advertisements often feature overtly sensuous figures. These displays of sexuality are made acceptable by linking them to Indian traditions — a revealing costume on a villager, for example, can be regarded as a rural custom.

Bollywood and Australia

बॉलीवुड और ऑस्ट्रेलिया

In recent years Australia has marketed itself internationally as a filmmaking destination. Since 1997 the country has provided a backdrop for an increasing number of Bollywood films. Indian filmmakers have been attracted to Australia's diverse locations and dramatic landscapes, from

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snow-capped mountains and stunning beaches to city skylines, all within one country. Infrastructure, post-production facilities, highly trained crews and a favourable exchange rate add to the attraction.

Initially used as the setting for fantasy song and dance sequences or to demonstrate the contrast between foreign and Indian values, overseas locations are becoming more important to the plot of Bollywood films. This is particularly the case with NRI (non-resident Indian) films that deal with Indians living abroad in countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia.

Film advertising also drew on Australia's appeal — at first by incorporating recognisable landmarks and then, less obviously, by reflecting aspects of the Australian lifestyle. These days, a Bollywood poster may appear little different from its international counterparts.

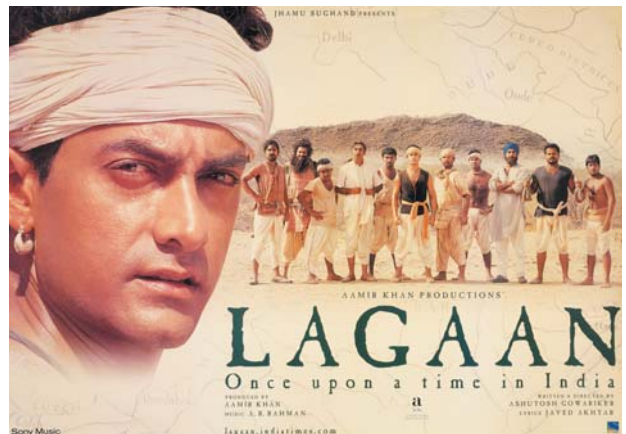
Global perspective

वैश्विक परिप्रेक्ष्य

Influenced by the new global culture of MTV, Hollywood and the internet, the Indian film industry went through major changes in the 1990s. A younger generation began to create films with higher production values that depicted the modern, affluent, consumerist lifestyles of India's growing middle class. However the films retain their Indian identity through the use of music and the inclusion of traditional family-oriented themes and values.

Film advertising has also changed. More than ever, star portraits are the major component of campaigns. Traditional hand-painted hoardings were once common, but now the art-form is increasingly rare. Posters too are no longer designed by hand but on computers, using digital photographic techniques. The results are slick, sophisticated, contemporary designs — a reflection of Indian cinema's arrival on the international scene.

An increasingly popular genre is the NRI (non-resident Indian) film. Some are set entirely in a



Lagaan (Once upon a time in India), Simrit Brar & Glamour, © V&A Images/Courtesy Amir Khan Productions.

foreign location, but often they explore issues facing Indians on their return to India after living in the west.

Fearless Nadia

फ़ीयरलेस नाडिया

During the 1930s and 1940s the actress who starred in some of the most successful Hindi films was not born in India nor was she of Indian heritage. Working under the name 'Fearless Nadia', that star was Mary Evans from Western Australia.

After appearing on stage and in a circus in India, Mary was 'discovered' in Bombay in 1935 by brothers J B H and Homi Wadia, who ran Wadia Movietone. Athletic and bold, she was cast as a female action character in *Hunterwali (The woman with the whip)*. The role transformed her into a household name. For the next 30 years Fearless Nadia made films exclusively for the Wadias. Starring in over 40 films before retiring in 1967, she attained a level of popularity unmatched by any other actress of her time in India.

Only a handful of Fearless Nadia films survive. More posters promoting the movies still exist. Their imagery leaves her many fans in no doubt that they will be treated to an abundance of action and death-defying stunts.

Further reading

Websites

- <http://www.bollywhat.com/>
A funny introduction to Bollywood that explains what it means when a character touches their ears ... and other common Bollywood gestures.
- <http://www.upperstall.com/home.html>
Reviews of classic Bollywood films as well as biographies of important people in Hindi cinema.
- <http://www.uiowa.edu/~incinema/index.html>
Discussions of many Hindi films, plus the syllabus of an introductory university course in Hindi cinema — with good book references.
- <http://www.greencine.com/static/primers/bollywood.jsp>
A concise introduction to Bollywood.
- <http://www.hindioldies.net/>
Watch clips and hear Bollywood songs from the 1940s to 1980s.

Books

Exhibition catalogue: Laurie Benson, *Cinema India: the art of Bollywood*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2007.

Book on which exhibition is based: Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, *Cinema India: the visual culture of Hindi film*, Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Nasreen Munni Kabir, *Bollywood: the Indian cinema story*, Channel 4 Books, 2002.

Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood cinema: temples of desire*, Routledge, 2001.

Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood films*, BFI screen guides, 2005.

Please note: the websites referred to in these notes were available and suitable at the time of publication. We advise teachers to check sites before recommending them to students.



Satyam Shivam Sundaram (Love, Truth and Beauty), Unknown, © V&A Images/Courtesy of R K Films.

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